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ABSTRACT OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates, first, to methods and compositions for the modulation of acid sphingomyelinase (ASM)-related processes, including apoptosis. Such apoptosis

- 5 can include, but is not limited to, environmental stressinduced apoptosis such as, for example, ionizing radiation
 and/or chemotherapeutic agent-induced apoptosis. Apoptosis
 can be characterized by a cellular morphology comprising
 cellular condensation, nuclear condensation or zeiosis. The
- 10 present invention further relates to methods for the identification of compounds which modulate (<u>i.e.</u>, either increase or decrease) sensitivity to ASM-related processes, including apoptosis.

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